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Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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World Diabetes Day

Today is World Diabetes Day – the theme of 2008's World Diabetes Day is 'Diabetes in Children and Adolescents'.

Studies estimate that 1.5 million Australians have diabetes – half of these undiagnosed – and 275 Australians develop diabetes every day.

The two most common types of diabetes, in type 1 diabetes, the pancreas, a large gland behind the stomach, stops making insulin. Without insulin, the body's cells cannot turn glucose (sugar), into energy. Without insulin the body burns its own fats as a substitute. Type 1 diabetes is not preventable.

I was pleased to recently be joined by the CEO's of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and of Diabetes Australia to announce that the Rudd Government will provide a subsidy to help with the cost of insulin pumps for up to 700 type 1 diagnosed Australians.

The insulin pump program will provide a means-tested subsidy of between \$500 and \$2,500. Insulin pumps help young people with type 1 diabetes move from multiple daily insulin injections to insulin pump therapy.

An insulin pump significantly improves the health of users by making it easier to control their condition. It also reduces the need for parents to supervise the management of a child's type 1 diabetes.

In type 2 diabetes the pancreas makes some insulin but it is not produced in the amount the body needs and it does not work effectively. In recent years the population of diagnosed type 2 Australian's has increased, with the rate doubling to over 700,000 in the fifteen years to 2005.

Type 2 diabetes results from a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Although there is a strong genetic predisposition, the risk is greatly increased when associated with lifestyle factors such as high blood pressure, overweight or obesity, insufficient physical activity and poor diet.

In response to this growing obesity epidemic, earlier this year I established the National Preventative Health Taskforce, Chaired by Professor Rob Moodie, to assist in developing Australia's first truly comprehensive Preventative Health Strategy.

Last month I was pleased to launch the Taskforce's Discussion Paper *Australia: The Healthiest Country by 2020*.

In addition, the Government has announced a number of initiatives to immediately address childhood obesity and inactivity. These increase the risk of type 2 diabetes:

- Healthy Kids Checks – basic health checks for all four year olds to improve childhood health
- The *Get Set 4 Life – Habits for Healthy Kids Guide* – a guide given to parents as part of the Healthy Kids Check which provides advice on healthy lifestyles for children
- The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program, which will provide up to 190 primary schools with grants of up to \$60,000 to build a vegetable garden and kitchen facilities to help children appreciate the benefits of growing and eating fresh food
- The Healthy Active Australia Community and School Grants Program, which will see \$17.6 million provided for 190 schools and community organisations to run local programs promoting healthy and active lifestyles
- The Active After Schools Communities program which encourages participation in after-school physical activity
- Guidelines on healthy eating and physical activity in early childhood settings.

The Government also provides \$400 million each year in support for diabetic products supplied through the National Diabetes Services Scheme and expenditure on medicines for diabetes through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

For more information on diabetes, see

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/pq-diabetes>.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220.